



CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL CAR PARKS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD REMOTELY ON
WEDNESDAY 20TH OCTOBER AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor J. Ridgewell – Vice Chair

Councillors:

A. Hussey, P. Leonard, B. Owen, J. Roberts, J. Roberts and W. Williams

Co-opted Members Councillors:

N. Dix, S. Morgan, G. Simmonds and J Taylor

Together with:

C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), C.Campbell, (Transportation Engineering Manager)
D. Smith (Principal Engineer – Traffic Management) and Cllr J. Pritchard (Deputy Leader and
Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Property) observing.

1. TO APPOINT A CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

Nominations were sought in respect of the position of chair of the task and finish group. It was moved and seconded that Councillor Denver Preece be appointed as Chair of the Caerphilly.

County Borough Council Car Parks Task and Finish Group and by a show of hands this was agreed.

RESOLVED that Councillor Denver be appointed Chair of the County Borough Council Car Parks Task and Finish Group.

Nominations were sought in respect of the position of Vice Chair of the task and finish group. It was moved and seconded that Councillor John Ridgewell be appointed as Vice Chair of the County Borough Council Car Parks Task and Finish Group and by a show of hands this was agreed.

RESOLVED that Councillor John Ridgewell be appointed Vice Chair of the County Borough Council Car Parks Task and Finish Group.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Expressions of interest were received from councillors not on the respective scrutiny

committees, that established this task and finish group. In view of number of places filled by members from the parent scrutiny committees, there are spare places. The Members who had expressed an interest have particular knowledge and skills that would be of benefit to the group. The group were therefore asked to accept the following councillors as co-opted members:

Councillor N. Dix
Councillor S. Morgan
Councillor G. Simmonds
Councillor J. Taylor

It was moved and seconded that all four Members be appointed as co-opted members of the task and finish group, and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Councillor N. Dix, Councillor S. Morgan, Councillor G. Simmonds and Councillor J. Taylor be appointed as co-opted members of the task and finish group.

Clarification was sought whether co-opted members would have voting rights. Members were advised that task and finish groups tend to operate by reaching a consensus. However, if required, it was confirmed from advice sought from the Monitoring Officer, that co-opted members would be entitled to vote.

3. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D. Preece and J. Taylor.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were declared.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHODOLOGY FOR REVIEW.

The Scrutiny Manager advised Members that the task and finish group had been re-convened to specifically look at parking charges in town centres. The group were reminded that parking charges had been suspended until September 2022 due to the Covid-10 pandemic with the aim to encourage people to visit the high streets.

Therefore, it was suggested that the terms of reference should be 'to review town centre car parking charges in view of the effects of the pandemic on the high street economy'

The group discussed how they would approach the review and what information would be needed. This had been discussed at a meeting of Council when it suggested that the task and finish group re-convene.

Cabinet have also considered a report on car parking at the Twyn, Caerphilly and the rear of High Street, Blackwood at its meeting on the 13th October 2021. Cabinet agreed that any changes are considered by the task and finish group.

The group debated how it will need to consider the pros and cons of free parking, alongside the impact, costs against the loss of income, staffing consequences, the Council's policies e.g. climate emergency declaration and promoting the greater use of public transport. The views of businesses in the main towns and it was suggested that members undertake site visits. Agreement was reached that the group will only consider car parks the main towns of eh county borough.

A member having looked at the Welsh Government commissioned research on this subject across Wales, suggested that they should compare with the situation in Newport and Cwmbran. This is because Newport charges for parking and Cwmbran doesn't. When the high street in Newport has suffered considerably whereas Cwmbran has not. Some Members felt that it would be difficult to compare towns in Caerphilly with either Newport or Cwmbran because of the parking infrastructure is quite different.

It was moved and seconded that that towns outside the Caerphilly county borough towns would not be included in the review. By a show of hands this was agreed.

RESOLVED that towns outside the Caerphilly county borough towns would not be included in the review.

Members discussed whether park and ride car parks should be included and it was stated that this is something outside the terms of reference already agreed. In addition, Park and Ride will be a matter for future consideration with Transport for Wales.

It was moved and seconded that this review will not include park and ride car parks. By a show of hands this was agreed

RESOLVED that this review will not include park and ride car parks.

Members highlighted the comparative income from car parks in Blackwood compared to other main towns, before charges were suspended. Members were advised that the reason that Blackwood had previously raised more income was because it has considerably more car parks than other towns.

It was suggested that a charges v income comparison is needed. A member felt that charges if applied should be the same across the county borough whereas another felt that the individual towns are not comparable, and it isn't about splitting the costs across the county borough. Another member advised that this had already been considered by the Joint Scrutiny committee, and Cabinet had accepted their recommendation for equality of charging across the town centre car parks Members considered that the group needs meaningful data on the effectiveness of parking charges on the vibrancy of the towns.

The group views were summarised so far with the group agreeing to concentrate on the main towns: Bargoed, Blackwood, Caerphilly, Newbridge, Risca and Ystrad Mynach.

To consider if the group will carry out a survey of Businesses in town centres to gather views on whether fee car parking has had a beneficial impact on the economy of the high street.

To review existing research on free parking, 2 hour free parking etc. options.

Task and Finish Group Members to carry out independent visits to car parks and liaise with Scrutiny Manager.

To receive an update on impact of the suspension of parking charges to include loss of income, staffing implications and costs to run the car parks, including possible impact on grant funding.

Members agreed that when the group were considering options for car parking charges the potential effect on public transport would need to be considered.

A member stated that they want to see charging equity across the county borough. Members were reminded that the last report of the group had recommended that parking charges were the same in all car parks. The group were advised that equality and equity are different issues, and the group will need to be clear on what they are aiming to achieve. It is also

important to ensure that any recommendation align with existing policies such as the Climate Emergency.

Clarity is needed on related residents permit issues During covid lockdown periods renewals were not carried out and there was less enforcement, but this has since re-started. Complaints have been received from ward Members and residents about the knock-on impact on permit parking from the suspension of parking charges. Officers confirmed that the E&S scrutiny committee chair and vice chair have asked that this is considered by the group. It was agreed to include the Residents Permits parking.

The meeting closed at 18:20 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the next appropriate meeting they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR